

## ***Bring Them Home/Aiskótáhkapiyaaya***

Documentary Feature

85 minutes

Thuderheart Films/The Redford Center

### **Synopsis**

*Bring Them Home/Aiskótáhkapiyaaya* chronicles a decades-long initiative by members of the Blackfoot Confederacy to bring wild buffalo (Blackfeet: *iinnii*) back to the Blackfeet Reservation. A thriving wild buffalo population would not only reconnect Blackfeet with a central part of their heritage, spirituality and identity, but would provide economic opportunities and healing for the community. Along the way, however, the initiative faces obstacles from ranchers who see the buffalo as a threat to the cattle ranches that dominate the land and are a legacy of colonization.

*Bring Them Home* examines the deeply meaningful role that buffalo played in Blackfeet life prior to the arrival of settlers who nearly eradicated wild buffalo in an effort to eradicate the Blackfeet people. For Blackfeet, the buffalo are seen not only as fundamental to a healthy ecosystem, but as spiritual relatives. Their removal from the land meant the loss of the Blackfeet way of life, the trauma of which still reverberates today.

In the present day, the film focuses on three main protagonists who are at the heart of the effort to reclaim these traditions through wildlife conservation: Ervin Carlson, director of the Blackfeet Buffalo Program; Paulette Fox, co-creator of the linnii Initiative; and Leroy Little Bear, a leading tribal elder and educator involved in the linnii Initiative. They join forces with non-native conservation groups, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society of New York City, who recognize the buffalo as a keystone species not only for Blackfeet lands, but for North America's ecological stability. Ultimately, they strive to return to the wild a herd of buffalo that are direct descendants of the buffalo that originally inhabited their land.

### **Producers' Note**

The histories of the Blackfeet and buffalo are a shared experience of near extinction, genocide and forced removal founded on the everlasting effects of colonization. Blackfeet culture, spirituality, and livelihoods are inextricably connected to buffalo, as are the grasslands. Without buffalo roaming there is no healthy prairie, and the Blackfeet, the original stewards of the land, will be forever without an important piece of their history. Through a mix of Indigenous and western storytelling, *Bring Them Home* shows what it means through the eyes of Indigenous Peoples to live in relationship with animals and with the land, to appreciate buffalo as wildlife, and educates all audiences about the importance of rewilding buffalo and indigenous-led efforts of conservation.

*Bring Them Home* focuses on the Blackfeet's linnii (Buffalo) Initiative, supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Oakland Zoo, which was created to conserve traditional lands, protect Blackfeet culture, and return the buffalo to their own ancestral lands. The film examines efforts to return the Elk Island Herd that was moved to Canada as one of the last wild buffalo herds back to their original lands, and then to rewild them. Part of the film's goal is to help raise awareness throughout the Blackfoot Confederacy (with a particular focus on the Southern Piegan Tribe) and, in fact, the world about the linnii Initiative, and to create long-term

financial sustainability for the program. Many other tribes are watching to see if it's successful as they bring buffalo back to other parts of the Great Plains.

Buffalo and Blackfeet are not separate in Indigenous worldviews and bringing them home to their original lands is critical to cultural, spiritual, and economic healing. In addition, buffalo are a keystone species in a healthy grassland ecosystem—one does not fully function without the other. The rewilding will be difficult, and the tribe faces many obstacles. We will use the film to promote rewilding through national screenings and community-led engagement. We will lead an education and impact campaign and are talking with the Blackfeet Community College as a key partner. Our impact campaign follows the Blackfeet Medicine Wheel and is centered on advocacy, reciprocity, action, and education. We envision long-term sustainability for the Blackfeet's linnii Initiative.

### **Primary Interviewees**

#### **Ervin Carlson**

Ervin is the director of the Blackfeet Buffalo Program and the president of the Intertribal Buffalo Council. He has been a fierce advocate for buffalo recovery in the Montana legislature and has spent almost three decades now trying to return buffalo to Black feet country.

#### **Paulette Fox**

Paulette is a member of the Kain ai Nation, buffalo Canadian band of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Her entire life is intertwined with b, starting with a spiritual experience she had when she was five, leading her to ultimately co-create the linnii Initiative, the Blackfoot initiative to return wild buffalo to their ancestral lands.

#### **Leroy Little Bear**

Leroy is the leading elder involved in the linnii Initiative. A founder of the Native American Studies Department at the University of Lethbridge, Canada – where he served as Chair for 21 years – he also went on to become the founding director of Harvard University's Native American Program. He is now recognized as one of the continent's leaders in the advancement and acceptance of North American Indian philosophy.

### **About the Filmmakers**

#### **Ivan MacDonald, Producer**

Ivan MacDonald is an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and an enrolled member of the Blackfeet tribe. His most recent project Bring Them Home won the Big Sky Award at the 2024 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival. Bring Them Home is Executive Produced and narrated by Oscar-nominated actress Lily Gladstone. He was an inaugural fellow for the Netflix and Illuminative Producers fellowship and was an inaugural recipient of the Hulu and Firelight Kindling fund. Currently, he is the 2024 Mark Silverman honoree for Sundance's Producing Lab. With his sister Ivy, he is also directing When They Were Here which is a feature-length documentary about the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls crisis told through the lens of their family and community. His work has been supported by Sundance, ITVS, and IDA.

#### **Ivy MacDonald, Co-Director**

Ivy MacDonald is a director, producer, writer and cinematographer based in Montana. She is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet tribe. Her most recent project Bring Them Home premiered at

the 2024 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival. *Bring Them Home* is executive produced and narrated by Academy Award nominee Lily Gladstone. In late 2023 she co-wrote and co-directed her first narrative short film titled *Buffalo Spirit*, which will premiere later this year. She also helped produce *Murder in Bighorn* which premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and aired nationally on Showtime. Ivy also won an Emmy for her producing work on the 2020 ESPN shot *Blackfeet Boxing: Not Invisible*. She is currently directing for her second feature length documentary titled *When They Were Here*, a documentary about the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls crisis within her community. *When They Were Here* has received support from Sundance, IDA and ITVS.

### **Daniel Glick, Co-Director / Writer**

Daniel Glick is a director, writer, producer, cinematographer and editor. For his short film, *Iniskim* (2019), he was nominated for three Emmys (directing, producing and photography) and won one for photography. His first feature documentary film, *A Place to Stand*, the true story of poet Jimmy Santiago Baca, broadcast nationally on PBS in 2018. He has directed and produced half a dozen fiction shorts and several dozen short and branded documentaries. Three of his most recent personal projects were *Our Last Refuge*, *Iniskim*, and *Bring Them Home* - all short films set on the Blackfeet Reservation that he worked on with Blackfeet tribal members.

### **Zane Clampett, Director of Photography**

Zane Clampett (Yankton Sioux / Ihanktonwan Nation) is the film's director of photography. Zane graduated from Montana State University's film school in 2015 and has worked with Daniel on numerous projects, including all three previous films set on the Blackfeet Reservation – *Our Last Refuge*, *Bring Them Home* and *Iniskim*. His work on *Iniskim* with Daniel won an Emmy. Additional Credits include the award-winning surf film *The Accord* as well as dozens of commercial projects.

### **Sarah Clarke, Producer**

Sarah Clarke is an award-winning TV and film actress (24, *Twilight*, *Bosch*) whose lifelong passion for wildlife preservation and environmental protection come together in this film. She first learned about the linnii Initiative in 2016 and helped produce *Iniskim*, our Emmy-winning short fiction film shot on the Blackfeet buffalo drive. It was after this project that she co-founded Thunderheart Films with Daniel and started work on *Buffalo Resurrection*. *Buffalo Resurrection* is her first feature documentary.

### **Lily Gladstone, Executive Producer, Narrator**

Lily Gladstone (Kainawa, Amskapi Pikuni, Nimi'iipu) was raised on the Blackfeet Reservation. Film credits include Kelly Reichardt's "*Certain Women*" and "*First Cow*", Alex and Andrew Smith's "*Winter in the Blood*", Showtime's "*Billions*" and HBO's "*Room 104*". For her role in *Certain Women*, she has received 7 critics choice awards and an Indie Spirit Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress. In February 2021, she was cast opposite Leonardo DiCaprio in Martin Scorsese's upcoming "*Killers of the Flower Moon*".

In addition to her acting credits, Gladstone has worked with many non-profits, social justice and human rights organizations, including National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Living Voices, Red Eagle Soaring, Longhouse Media, Yellow Bird Inc., The Roxy Film Academy and Conscious Alliance, facilitating expressive-arts and Theater for Social Change workshops.

**Post-Production Sound Services by**

Skywalker Sound  
a Lucasfilm Ltd. Company  
Marin County, California

**Advisors:**

Ervin Carlson, Director, Blackfeet Buffalo Program  
Paulette Fox, Environmental Consultant and Kainai Tribal Member  
John Murray, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer  
Helen Carlson, Blackfeet Community College

**Institutional/Organizational Funders**

The Redford Center  
Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies  
Wildlife Protection Solutions  
Montana Film Office

**Film Festivals**

Big Sky Documentary Festival  
Salem Film Fest  
International Wildlife Film Festival to the festival list

**Awards**

Big Sky Award, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival